



## EP288\_Gint Grabauskas

**Lisa Nichols 00:03**

Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes. But each year in the United States, about 6000 people are born with an extra chromosome, making them a person with Down syndrome. If you've ever encountered someone with Down syndrome, you know that they are some of the kindest, most joyful people you will ever meet. They truly have something extra.

**Lisa Nichols 00:35**

My name is Lisa Nichols and I have spent the last 24 years as both the CEO of technology partners and as the mother to Ally. Ally has something extra in every sense of the word. I have been blessed to be by her side as she impacts everyone, she meets. Through these two important roles is CEO and mother to Ally, I have witnessed countless life lessons that have fundamentally changed the way I look at the world. While you may not have an extra chromosome, every leader has something extra that defines who you are.

**Lisa Nichols 01:10**

Join me as I explore this something extra in leaders from all walks of life and discover how that difference in each of them has made a difference in their companies, their families, their communities and in themselves. If you'd liked this episode today, please go to Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen and leave us a five-star rating.

**Lisa Nichols 01:35**

I am thrilled to have Gint Grabauskas on the show today. Gint is the Chief Technology Officer at Qwick. Gint Grabauskas, you cannot even imagine how excited I am to have you on the Something Extra Podcast today.

**Gint Grabauskas 01:53**

The feeling's mutual, Lisa. Grateful to be here.

**Lisa Nichols 01:56**

Well, you know you and I first met I think we've known each other for nearly I was kind of trying to count it up, Gint. Yeah, but we're really not that old. We're not like saying to our listeners that we're old. But I think we've known each other probably for close to 20 years is what I think.

**Gint Grabauskas 02:14**

That is correct. I think at times, you know, when we met in St. Louis. Working together with Tech Partners, and I might have been at BioMerieux at the time. And then fast forward to today, I'm in Arizona, you've built a very successful business. And we've stayed in touch. It's been a real pleasure.

**Lisa Nichols 02:32**

It has been, it has been. You know, so you were at BioMerieux, which is a long time. We just celebrated again, we just celebrated 30 years of Technology Partners on Saturday.

**Gint Grabauskas 02:43**

Wow. Congratulations.

**Lisa Nichols 02:44**

Thank you. I know, we feel so blessed about that. But I think BioMerieux probably has been a client of ours maybe for 24 years or something like that. So, you know, we worked with you when you were at BioMerieux, you were leading the software engineering group, I think you were over, you were the VP there. But then you left and you went SAVVIS. And fortunately, we're very blessed, because you were gracious to bring us along. And so, then we, SAVVIS became a partner for us, as well. But, you know, again, Greg, and I've always admired you as a technology professional. But I will tell you equally as much just an amazing human being, you are an amazing human being. And so, we're going to talk a lot about the things that you've done. And, you know, just you're a man of faith, which, you know, we completely

connect on that point. You're a husband to Yvonne, two boys, Kyle and Nick. And you have had an amazing career. And I'm just going to run through this real quick. You've gone from software developer to software architect to team lead to functional manager to engineering director to VP, CIO, CTO. And you've got such a breadth of industry experience, which is amazing too, Gint. I mean, everything from Telecom, to storage to enterprise software, to healthcare, power cloud facilities, real estate, and now in the hospitality sector. I mean, it's really crazy when you think about the breadth of experience that you've had. I mean, it's, it's like any technology professionals dream to have the career that you've had.

**Gint Grabauskas 04:22**

Thank you. I feel blessed. It's been a lot of hard work. I, you know, you and I share a lot of, you know, notions around how we are blessed to work in this industry and how, you know, where we go comes from some of what we give to the bring to the table, but from some above. But the common thread for me across all of these has really been like, really three things. I put it in three buckets people, process, and tech. People, you know, leading servant leading, namely, knowledge workers, it's an art and a science and, you know, my master's is in leadership and that has really codified how I lead others. Process, you know, Agile transformation. I've got eight under my belt, as you know, but getting software quickly into the hands of users with high quality has been another key theme. And then tech, you know, tech moves so quickly, but staying ahead of the curve architectures still being able to develop software. Now with the advent of AI specific Gen AI and things of that nature to boost productivity. I consider myself like AI forward, but people, process, tech that has been the common thread throughout my entire journey in tech, and I feel blessed.

**Lisa Nichols 05:27**

Yes. Well, we're gonna jump into a lot of that. And I've got a lot of questions around it. But before we unpack all of that, again, I we love to talk about growing up, because you were born and raised in Lithuania. So, tell me about growing up for you. And when did you come to the States? I assume that you came to the States for university, but I could be wrong on that. But tell me about growing up.

**Gint Grabauskas 05:52**

Sure. So, actually, I was born in Lithuania. I can still speak, read and write fluent Lithuanian. But I emigrated to Chicago when I was relatively young for so hence no accent. So, I grew up in the Midwest, really in Chicago, where I went to grade school, high school college was at the Illinois Institute of Technology, where I got my double E, Electrical Engineering, with a computer science minor. And then years later moved to Colorado, Fort Collins. And that's where I was, you know, I had my both boys but that's where I got my Master's, Master's of Science and Leadership. But growing up, was a Southside Chicago, I was the first in my family to get a college degree. Come from very humble beginnings blue collar immigrants that my dad was a factory worker, my mom started at Sears, back when that was a thing and like the mailroom and worked your way up to be like a CAT operator. So, you have very humble beginnings. But we, you know, the common thread for us was always work hard, love your family, love God. And just, you know, don't follow the money, just follow the work. Do the best you can and hopefully success follows.

**Lisa Nichols 06:59**

Right. I know in you and I've talked about that very, very strong values, very strong foundation. And I know you're just like me, you're grateful for that, Gint. Because I know that's not always the case with some people, but you certainly had wonderful parents. So, can you tell me a little bit about what you were interested in as a kid? Because you did go on to get a double E. From the Institute of Illinois Technology. I know that that is a really renowned school for engineering and for computer science, but what, what was it growing up that really kind of was the precipice for, for wanting to do something in tech?

**Gint Grabauskas 07:41**

Sure, yeah. So, for me, I had always had a fascination with how things worked. I remember my dad would bring home old TVs, and I would take them apart in grade school, just to see how things worked inside and back, then we're talking vacuum tubes and very large printed circuit boards. And then things got smaller. And, you know, it was I think, sixth grade that I got my first computer, the Coleco Vision Adam. And I just started tinkering and playing and writing programs and really, really loved technology. Then went on to, you know, in high school to have a Commodore Amiga, Amiga 500, where I started really going deep into assembly, programming, C programming, writing video games, because I love to play them. But I also love to see how they work. And that just kind of, I've always been this geek, this technologist that is interested in me. But where I get a little different is I'm also I love people, I love teams. I love sports. I played basketball for many, many years. And that combination of geek plus working with others, that's kind of what spawned the leader, the tech leader in me, you know.

**Lisa Nichols** 08:42

It's a great combination, it's a great combination. Well, I love that, that even as a little guy, you're taking things apart. You know what it is? It's curiosity. You have a very healthy curiosity. You also, Gint, I know this about you, because you've continued to go on. I know, you've got your master's in organizational leadership, but you went on to get new certificates and other things. So, you've got a growth mindset. You're a learner, you're a student, but we'll talk about this, you're not only a student that you also love to teach. And we'll, we will touch on that in a little bit. But so, tell me about can we talk just briefly about BioMerieux and Savvis, more about BioMerieux because Barry may be a mirror you people may not realize if you're a St. Louisan, you know it or if you're in Paris, you know it, maybe Salt Lake you know, they've got an operation in Salt Lake. But it's such an awesome company. Can you tell our listeners just a little bit about BioMerieux and the important work that BioMerieux is doing in the world?

**Gint Grabauskas** 09:51

Absolutely. So, you know, BioMerieux, they're kind of like Google of France. They are known just like you said, Lisa, they're known everywhere in France. There are very big tech company. And really, what they do is really two things very well. IVD and ASD. IVD stands for in vitro diagnostics, they basically take a sample of fluid from your body, whether it's blood or you know, sweat or semen, or whatever. And they check it for a pathogen, right? IVD. And they, they see if you have some type of infection. Then ASD, they take that and say, okay, this infection can be killed by this antibiotic at this, you know, at this dose at its simplest form, that is what they do. And in there is molecular biology. And then there are, you know, machines that are built that read the samples, and then software that extrapolates what's going on. But at its simplest form, that's what they do. And think about it when you're sick, and things go off to a lab to be tested, chances are there's a BioMerieux VITAC device in there, with the hardware and the software running that identifies what's wrong with you, and how to kill the pathogen that's in your body.

**Lisa Nichols** 10:54

It's just fascinating. If you are in St. Louis, listeners, reach out and see if you can take a tour. I've done a tour and it's very impressive, the BioMerieux facility here in St. Louis. I'm sure the one in France is even more impressive. Well, talk to me about this a little bit. Because I know there's different definitions, but you went to Savvis. And the reason that you were tapped on the shoulder, go Savvis is because they really needed to want, they wanted to do an Agile transformation, you were to bring Agile to Savvis. How do you personally define Agile, Gint? And you know, have you seen, how I know, how I want you to define Agile, and then talk to me about what you've seen with organizations, because a lot of organizations say, oh, we are all Agile. But then when you get in, and you look under the covers, there's, there's some other things that they could be doing, right? So, tell me a little bit about that. And then I've got one other question for you before we move on to another subject.

**Gint Grabauskas** 11:59

Of course, Lisa. So, for me at its simplest form, Agile is a mindset. And the mindset is we can develop software and systems better with a customer at the forefront where we iterate quickly, we fail fast, learn fast, and just rinse and repeat. Scrum, Kanban, Extreme Programming, those are methodologies against the Agile mindset. But at its simplest, it's a mindset, right? And companies that the smell test I've always used again, as a working Agile coach, as an addition to a CTO, eight transformations under my belt. The smell test I use is when a company says let's do Agile, no one does it, you either are or you aren't. And what I've seen is that companies, you know, they're all different. So, you can't just read an Agile book and apply it, what you have to do is get in there and understand the people, the process, the tech, the culture, the appetite, how quickly they want to experiment and grow from there. And that's what I've learned in eight Agile transformations is, even though you may be applying, say a two-week iteration of Scrum framework, they're all going to be different, how user stories are built, how executives want to see demonstrations, how metrics are used, how value is delivered. That's the biggest advice I give to companies and that are, quote, unquote, Agile is tweak it for your company. Because at the end of the day, the customer matters, how you build value, how you get to market, how you release is so important. The process is just a means to an end. Very important, of course, but make sure you have that customer in mind.

**Lisa Nichols** 13:28

Right. So, you've already talked about some of these things, but opposed to waterfall. So why would a company want to adopt an Agile methodology, Gint? You've already named a few things. But what else have you seen that, I would be curious as to when, when companies do adopt Agile, have you seen the employee engagement come go up? Do you feel like there's a lot more collaboration on the team? Do you see happier, happier employees? In that kind of environment?

**Gint Grabauskas** 14:04

So, two questions there like, Why would you go from waterfall to Agile wants to deliver value quickly, right, much faster software changes so fast now. Software is eating the world. You know, that famous, famous saying, you can

argue every company now as a software company, and there are places where waterfall still makes sense. You know, circuit design, long lead times for supply chain, there are areas where it makes, NASA building a shuttle. You're not going to iterate in two weeks and release it, right? You're going to make sure all those controls are in place. But in general, I'd say many companies that want to build software quickly and iteratively adopt Agile to go fast, right? Fast with quality not blindly. And yes, I have seen engagement improved tremendously. And you can actually measure, you know, measure engagement improvement. But I've seen, you know, developers get proud when they are called to demonstrate something they've built in the last two weeks to an executive. I've seen you know, product managers who are talking to customers get super excited to say, hey, you know, you thought it took us three months to deliver this feature, we got it to you in two sprints. I've seen revenues tick up significantly in various companies that have adopted Agile. So, there's so many benefits, you just need to, to make sure you have an open mind and go into it with a very smart pilot.

**Lisa Nichols** 15:18

And a good Agile coach, like Gint. Okay, so let's talk about in March of 2014, you did you lead you, you left, you and Yvonne and kids left St. Louis, went to Arizona, and you started working for GoDaddy. What a ride that is. I kind of went down a little rabbit hole, you know, because everybody knows about GoDaddy, right? Everybody knows about GoDaddy, now. I went down this little rabbit hole, Gint, and I don't know if you've done this or not. But Bob Parsons, I'm like where, what was the genesis of GoDaddy and a gentleman by the name of Bob Parsons, who is a serial entrepreneur, basically sold his financial services grew up, he grew up very poor. And I read that he flunked out of fifth grade. So really, really didn't do that well in school. But he had a few great ideas. And sold, sold his technology company, I think, to Intuit in 1994, and then in 2007, or 1997, then is when he founded GoDaddy. And you came in in 2014, at a very interesting time. And then, you know, GoDaddy had a successful exit in 2015. So, you were there to see all of that, again. What were you brought in to do? And what were the things that you felt like you were able to accomplish as a CTO when you came in to Godaddy to get them ready for IPO?

**Gint Grabauskas** 16:51

For sure. So, remember, GoDaddy, core business is really two things when I was there. Number one is domains. So, when you are a small medium business, say like, when you started Tech Partners, what's the very first thing you need to get on the web, you need a domain name? Boom, you bought it from GoDaddy? Well, what's the second thing you need, you typically need a website. I was not CTO at GoDaddy, I was VP of the hosting unit, the second largest business unit there. And I was brought in to basically take hosting and modernize it. It had been built through many iterations, it was working well, of course, but it wasn't ready for IPO. So, using that same people, process, tech analogy. I was brought in to get hosting ready for IPO across three dimensions. People, build a world class engineering, culture and team, best of the best to make sure that hosting is ready. Process, build an iterative, Agile process that delivers value across multiple product lines quickly. And tech start to converge the tech all these disparate platforms into kind of one start moving towards the cloud. And we're also doing you know, mergers and acquisitions, and organic growth.

**Gint Grabauskas** 16:54

GoDaddy bought Media Temple in Los Angeles, start bringing those two companies engineering cultures together. Fast forward, we were very successful. At a very successful IPO, my first. Great story. I was taken as a, luckily as a high potential to the New York Stock Exchange. Again, I wasn't C suite yet. I was one removed. But as a VP, I was brought to ring the bell, which was a really good, cool experience. But on television, I was filmed with Danica Patrick, who was our mascot at the time doing a conga line through the New York Stock Exchange. That was that was kind of our culture at GoDaddy.

**Lisa Nichols** 18:30

That's so awesome. You did have a cool culture. I think I remember did you have like scooters and things like that before scooters were really cool, Gint, to get around. And I remember, I remember a little bit of that, back in that day.

**Gint Grabauskas** 18:46

We were a little irreverent for sure. We had scooters and slides and ping pong tables. But that underlying business was very serious. It was almost formulaic to basically understand the world of SMBs. And how do we get them online. And we had a very important mission to do that. So, I mean, that donut shop in New York that needs a domain name, but needs a website. Their business is to them might be three people, but it's very important to be online and sell those things online. We enable the E commerce market for these SMBs quickly with the technology via domain names and hosting, and then eventually tools. So, fun, little crazy environment, but also very important mission.

**Lisa Nichols** 19:25

Right. And you learned a lot while you went on from there to Vixxo, which is a facility solutions company. But after that, then you went into Offerpad and I do think you were the CTO at Offerpad.

**Gint Grabauskas** 19:38

Correct.

**Lisa Nichols** 19:39

Right? And that's an AI buying or instant buying company that makes cash offers on homes and again, Gint, successful IPO. And I think of something like in '21 with a valuation of nearly \$3 billion. I think what was that experience like and again, what were you brought in to do and to get accomplished so that they could go public?

**Gint Grabauskas** 20:06

That was a great experience. It was. So, I joined, I joined Offerpad When they were just finished Series A round of funding. So pretty early stage. And, you know, it was a little bit of a risky move because they were here in Gilbert, Arizona, in a little office above the mall, literally above our mall. And there's little setup offices where think the quintessential startup man. You've got desks and tables and chairs and people crammed in a room. But there was a palpable energy we had an amazing founder, our CEO was brilliant in real estate. And he convinced me to join because it was at something like a trillion-dollar market cap or, or TAM, total addressable market for this product.

**Gint Grabauskas** 20:10

And, you know, Offerpad's core value is convenience, if you've ever bought or sold a home, Lisa, you know, it's a pain, showings and inspections and you name it, and Offerpad, digitized this transaction. Basically, on the on the sell side, you go to offer pad.com put in your address, and within 24 hours, you get a you get an actual cash offer. We're gonna give you \$400,000 for your home sight unseen. Well, how do we do that? Well, it's a very deep tech, ingrained type of, type of mechanism, where, you know, we use an AVM, Automated Valuation Model, we look at the comps, we automate a lot of that and we start to digitize the entire transaction. I was brought in again, people, process, tech to really take this company to the next level, I'm finding my sweet spot now is companies in the \$50 to \$100 million range that want to get to a billion plus. Again, build a workforce, an engineering talent pool, that's world class, build a process that allows you to quickly iterate release product. When I joined Offerpad, we were releasing maybe once a quarter, once every few months, when I left, we're releasing weekly. And then tech, you know, get the, Offerpad was a cloud native startup. Yay, that's great, you know, already using the cloud. But it was a traditional three tier system built on the cloud. So, we needed microservices API's, we need to start building horizontal scale. Fast forward, almost four years successful IPO this one my second was through SPAC. So, you know, a special purpose acquisition company, but it was still a very successful IPO.

**Lisa Nichols** 22:23

So, you've gone through two of these now, what are some of the lessons that you've learned?

**Gint Grabauskas** 22:31

For sure. So, grit and resilience is that, we can talk about it later, a little bit of that something extra you need, as a CTO as a leader as a department to get through IPO. Because think of the an audit, through IPO, the due diligence process is really really deep. They are gonna go so deep into your people, your talent pool. They're gonna go deep into your process, understand how software gets built. They're gonna go deep into your architecture, even look at code. So, you have to, you can't be perfect. But the lesson there is, answer the auditor, answer the question. Show, and if there's warts, don't lie, show the warts and say, here's my plan to mitigate. These are really smart people that are auditing you to get ready for IPO. They want you to be successful, don't hide a thing. So that's my first lesson is show everything that works. And for the stuff that don't work, at least show a plan, that you understand what's happening, and you know how to fix it. No company is perfect going into IPO. If you pretend to be they're going to know it and they think you're lying. That's the first thing.

**Lisa Nichols** 23:34

They're gonna smell that right away, aren't they?

**Gint Grabauskas** 23:36

They're going to smell it. The second lesson is help your people with leadership. These are times that are scary. These are times that you know, imagine a developer who's not used to a New York Stock Exchange auditor coming in and they want to know all about your code. And you're nervous, guide your people through it with dignity with aplomb with principle with kindness with empathy. Show them that there's a this path of hard work that's about to come will lead to a good place. And don't be afraid of the audit to come. Don't be afraid be proud of the tech you've built, even if



there's some tech debt. That's the second lesson, right? And really, the third lesson is remember all of this whom do you serve your customer? You know, you get to IPO you get to successful exit, you get a great product, you get accolades, but at the end of the day, the customer pays your bills. Never ever forget that.

**Lisa Nichols** 24:29

Oh, that's such great advice. Well, Gint, I've got a lot more I want to talk to you about but we do need to take a quick break and we'll be right back with Gint Grabauskas on the Something Extra Podcast.

**AD** 24:39

Hey, they're in a challenging business climate like this savvy leaders looking at technology to find an edge. This can mean the difference between staying ahead of the curve or playing catch up. It's time to collaborate with the highly skilled experts at Technology Partners. Our team of technologists draws upon decades of experience for your project, with each bringing a passion for solving problems and attract record of success. How can we help you overcome your biggest technology challenges? Visit [technologypartners.net](http://technologypartners.net) to book a free consultation with one of our leaders.

**Lisa Nichols** 25:08

Welcome back everyone to the Something Extra Podcast with my friend Gint Grabaskaus. So, Gint, now you are at a company called Qwick. And you're the CTO for Qwick. I think you started there in July of 2022. To tell our listeners a little bit about this is a neat model. This is a neat platform that has been built here. But tell us a little bit about what Qwick is. What they do. And, you know, I'd love for you to talk about the responsibilities and the things that you were specifically brought in to do.

**Gint Grabauskas** 25:41

Absolutely. So, Qwick as a tech enabled AI forward b2b to see hospitality platform. It's a marketplace, really a two-sided marketplace. On one side are businesses that need workers in food and beverage. So, think, you know, I've got a surge on a Friday, I need line cooks, I need chefs, I need bartenders, barbacks, you name it. On the other side are professionals that want to do work, want to do gig work on their own terms. They don't want a nine to five job, maybe it's a side hustle for him. Maybe it's, you know, they want only work Friday, Saturday, Sunday, but we bring the two together via a tech platform, at its essence, that is what Qwick does. And it's a very successful, interesting model. Two-sided platforms are notoriously difficult to solve. Supply and demand have to constantly be in equilibrium. I'm their CTO been there about two years, and I really lead product, engineering, and data. So, product, you know, what do we build into the platform. Engineering, how do we build it, and data as the underpinning of everything, you know, robust data platform that gives us forensics and allows our matching algorithm to be smart about how it matches the shifts to the workers?

**Lisa Nichols** 26:48

And I know that it's been on the Inc 5000. I mean, it's been quickly growing. So, it's gonna be fun to watch. It's gonna be fun to watch Qwick. And for our listeners, that's Q, W, I, C, K. So, tell me this, do you have you thought at all, Gint, about the future of work and how it's going to continue to evolve? Because I love what you just said about this gig economy? You know, but in hospitality, do you think that that's just going to continue that workers are going to want to work when they were want to work on their own timetable? Do you see any other evolution in the hospitality industry?

**Gint Grabauskas** 27:28

I do. I do see. There's a couple things happening right now macro factors. So yes, the gig work is very important to the workers, many of them want to get paid right away. And Qwick allows, as an example, we can pay you within 30 minutes of finishing your, your gig, which is super important. But they want to make their they want to schedule themselves around their children's basketball games around, you know, doctor visits, they don't want necessarily that nine to five, right? Some do. That's one trend. The other trend is the larger players want more W2 enterprise compliant like workers where our platform, traditionally a serve 1099 largely. We're also building a W2 product. Think of the large, large companies like us, like, like Aramark, that might want to staff Chicago Bears Stadium for, you know, one game. 100-line cooks. They're gonna want they, they would use our platform to now get compliant workers, they know that they've been through background checks, they know that they're there, they don't have criminal records, and they don't use drugs. So that's the other side of our platform as a W2, larger players that staff multisite food and beverage shifts, want a trusted partner Qwick happens to be that partner as well. So those are some of the ways.

**Gint Grabauskas** 28:44

On the other side, you know, in tech and in hospitality elsewhere, you've seen the emergence of AI is coming, you know, AI forward, we can talk about that later. But I do think the nature of work will be augmented by machines here shortly, it already is specifically a knowledge work. So those of us in tech, you know, I'll use Qwick as an example, we're starting to play with AI forward looking things copilots, smart chatbots, generative AI, things that allow us not to

replace humans, but to actually augment ourselves to make ourselves better. A real great example is a software developer that might use you know, a copilot to generate a unit test case, where 10 years ago, I'm crafting that JUnit, I'm using Java an example, Junit by hand, I'm now leveraging a copilot to help build me boilerplate code, and then I fill in the business logic. I'm now 5x my productivity.

**Lisa Nichols 29:38**

Absolutely. And we'll, we'll talk a little bit more about GenAI, I can't, I don't talk to anybody that doesn't want to talk about that. You know, Gint, so it's gonna be a game changer for sure. It already is in many cases, but I want to pivot I want to do a little pivot here, and what it really talks about leadership. And I would love for you to really talk about your leadership philosophy, and I know this about you, you describe yourself as a servant leader. I would love to know how you think about servant leadership. But we'd love to understand more about your leadership philosophy, and then specifically, how you cultivate high performance teams, because you already said previously, again, people, process, technology, the people aspect of it is so critical. So how have you cultivated these high-performance teams in your, in your career?

**Gint Grabauskas 30:37**

Great questions. And now you're going into a big passion of mine. I mean, I love tech as well. Don't get me wrong, but I'm unique in that I also love leadership and people. So, you are correct. I am a servant leader. And what does that mean? So, here's how I'll quantify it. Traditional MBA schools, no offense, teach the pyramid leader on top, minions in the bottom, I'm at the top and the most powerful you, you follow me, I'm going to tell you what to do. Servant Leadership flips this, I am at the bottom, all my people at the top, I come from a place of love. And what that means is I come into work every day thinking, How do I make the 50 100 200 people my department better, faster, smarter, stronger? Insert whatever adjective you want. But it comes from the notion that I'm serving you to do your best work. It's not weakness, sometimes that means I have to have tough discussions, crucial conversations with you. But because I've built this relationship where you know I care about you, your career and the company, we can have it, right?

**Gint Grabauskas 31:31**

So how does a servant leader cultivate, you know, high performance teams? I believe, and I studied this deeply in grad school. The clue there is how do you drive engagement? And engagement as defined by the behavioral psychologist is, discretionary effort. That means, I come into work and I give my head my heart my hands all in not because some overlord told me, but because I'm engaged. Well, how do you drive engagement, Lisa? Three levers. I'm a fan of Dan Pink's work, mastery, autonomy and sense of purpose. Mastery, I will get better at my craft by working on with Gint in his department. Autonomy, no one's micromanaging me. I've given some guardrails, given, you know, the ideas of what to build, but how is up to me. And sense of purpose, if I can tie the code that you are writing to a feature to a customer to a revenue driver, man, I've got you, I've got you in the head, the heart in the hands. So those are the ways we drive high performance teams.

**Gint Grabauskas 32:29**

And then the last thing I'll say is how I and my team's hire is very unique. We look for three specific things and everyone we hire. Thing one is functional chops. So, if you're a Java developer, make sure you're strong and we're going to test you on it. Thing two, Agile chops. Make sure you want to iterate, fail fast learn Kaizen, all that good stuff we talked about earlier in the podcast. And thing three, a high emotional intelligence. We don't want to hire any assholes that will really be toxic to work with. Those are the three.

**Lisa Nichols 32:58**

I heard someone say one time no jerks allowed. No jerks allowed here. So that's beautiful. That's wow, that's so beautiful. I love, I love that. Well, have you seen in in you talked about some things that you learned in grad school? Gint, have you seen your leadership evolve over the years and your philosophies? And I will go back to say and I think that this is, I know what you're saying on this? Do you think that leaders are born, or are they grown?

**Gint Grabauskas 33:32**

Oh, boy. So, okay, two questions. Has my leadership evolved? Absolutely. You know, I am a lifelong learner. I will never stop learning. And if you look at my leadership journey from the first time, I was a young software dev manager to now Heck yeah, it's evolved. I've had the benefit of so many coaches, so many leaders good and bad that I've learned from. So yes, I have evolved. One great example is, at Savvis, I had a leader who is now a really good friend of mine, but boy, he was tough. At the time, I didn't realize I get so frustrated with him. But fast forward many years, I'm like, I'm so grateful he toughened me up, because I'm in front of boards and execs and people where I need that toughness, right? So that's one example.

**Gint Grabauskas 34:14**

As far as our leaders born or where they grow into it, I do think there's a little bit of both, but you can teach leadership, but I think there's an innate want or desire to do it, right? I think organized sports is a great idea, a great example I play basketball. And I realize there's a team around me right as I'm, I can't just shoot alone, I can't just be the one on the court. So, I have to get the best out of others. They have to get the best out of me and I wanted that. I didn't want to be like the superstar nor was I I'm not that great at basketball. But the point is, there's like a propensity to want to lead and then if there's that propensity, you dabble in it. And then if you're really interested, you start to learn and organize and grow, and then be taught some skills I do think things are, are, are teachable. The last thing I'll say, though, is there's got to be a genuine approach to it, people were wired to see through BS. So, if you're a leader that's read a book, and you're quoting things, and it doesn't come across as genuine, you're actually going to do more harm than good. Step away from leadership, you got to, you got to really believed, and you have to play, you know, understand what you're doing.

**Lisa Nichols 35:26**

Right. And, and Gint, back to what you said, understand why you're doing it, right? And the motivation, and to in your case, it's to make people better around you and to, you know, help them win, help them succeed. And, I mean, Greg, and I've always tried to run our business that way, we said at the very beginning, you know, if we treat our people fairly, and we're good, our people, our people will be good to our clients. And, you know, then our success will follow that. And so, I could not agree with you more on all of that. Well, you've already answered this, I was going to ask you, you know, what kinds of things you look for when you're building your engineering teams, but you've already kind of given us the three things which I really love.

**Lisa Nichols 36:16**

So, I mean, we've talked a little bit about this, but what, what are the emerging technologies that you're really excited about? And we've already talked about Gen AI, there may be other ones, I would love to hear what you think, what do you think is coming around the bend that we all need to be paying attention to, Gint? And then the next question, because and we've already talked about this, and how leadership or how technology and leadership to has changed over the years, but technology's changing at such a rapid pace? How do you personally stay on top of it, Gint? Because it's difficult. Do you subscribe to certain magazines? Do you listen to certain podcasts? Do you read certain books? I would love for you to tell our listeners about that. And then I've got a couple more questions, and then we'll talk about something extra. So, the first question is really merging technologies that you're excited about?

**Gint Grabauskas 37:08**

For sure. So excited with some trepidation. So, the Gen AI wave, make no mistake, it is not hype. I truly believe that, in the next few years, if not already, magical things are going to happen, right? But with that comes a dark side. You know, new technologies tend to displace old ways of doing work. However, over the next few years, I do believe people plus the machine together will be way better than either individually can be alone. Great examples of this are already happening. You know, we're even doing some of this at Qwick and I know many companies are doing so. You know, developers, like I said, using a copilot to just be more efficient at code. Marketing teams, helping to generate content for personalized web, not just pumping it out, but jet generating it, then doing a human does a cross-check to make sure it jives, right? Human resource departments building policies through the help of natural language. Humans that don't know SQL programming can now come in and ask a question of a bot and say, generate some SQL to give me this query against the database. Or better yet, give me a graph that shows top customer attrition in the last month.

**Gint Grabauskas 38:21**

So, a lot of this requires a company to marry the LLM, the large language model, which is the foundation of Gen AI with your data. So, the LLM alone isn't good enough, because it's not secure. It's not like somebody else's cloud. But if you can bring it in with your data, you've now amplified your company. And I believe personally in five years, five years, maybe less, there'll be one or two types of companies: those that either use Gen AI or those that are out of business. And I believe it's that, that big of a seismic shift that's happening, think what cloud was, you know, a couple decades ago, when it first came out.

**Gint Grabauskas 38:59**

Your second question, how do I stay on, you know, on top of things? And you're right, tech is moving so fast, almost daily, it seems you get a new news story about something in a in the AI world, a few things I do. And I'm not saying you know, I'm perfect, but I try to keep Friday afternoons open. I call it Gint's Google time, where I'll read one of the biggest things I do is read MIT. You know, MIT periodicals, they have the tech, the monthly tech journal that comes out, I read that I'm even in a course right now with them on, on AI. It's an executive level course. But just staying up to date. I do still code, not production level every day because you got to do that full time. But I will prototype, play with things to stay relevant in Java. I'll read books. I will watch news stories.



**Gint Grabauskas 39:49**

But in addition to that, you know, it's also important to just healthy body, healthy mind to find time for yourself to network, to meditate a little bit to pray to exercise to eat right. Those are the ways As I try and stay up, stay ahead. And obviously, I surround myself with some really smart, amazing people where I work, where I live, whom I, whom I hanging out with? You know, so that, you know, I learned from them, I may be a servant leader at work at quick, I may have a department of product engine tech that I run, I may be teaching them a thing or two, but by golly, they're teaching me. These are the technologists that the boots on the ground, they're coming with the real issues of the day, and we're exploring them together. Well, those are some tidbits.

**Lisa Nichols 40:29**

Oh, that is such great advice. Such great advice. So let me ask you this. What advice would you give to aspiring technology leaders based on your own journey and accomplishments? So, you've got a young whippersnapper? And he's like, I want to, or he or she wants to be like, Gint. I want to be like, get one day I want to have get what is it called Gint Google Fridays? I want to be the CTO of a company one day, what would you say to them, Gint?

**Gint Grabauskas 41:03**

So, a couple things I would say are. Again, I'll use the people process and technology, it's really relevant. People, if you're going to want to aspire to be a CTO, you're going to need to understand a whole bunch of different people and how to lead and guide them. Executives, board members, your own team customers, it's not going to be enough for you to be the geek that sits alone in a corner and codes, you are going to have to expand and if you're an introvert like me, naturally, that's, that's who I am. You can't tell usually people that I can't believe an introvert I am. But you're gonna have to expand on the people side. On the process side, you're going to have to understand systems thinking and how to build systems quickly and efficiently. You may be a perfect back-end Java developer, and maybe you'll stay that, but you're gonna have to lift up and understand a little bit about the UI. You're gonna have to understand full stack, databases to, to lift up and understand how all the building blocks get put together. And then on top of that emerging technologies that will help you. Process. And then tech, you're going to have to understand the trends. You may not be coding in them day to day, depending on the size of your company, but you're gonna have to understand the trends enough to see how they apply to the business. Remember, the CTO and the CIO of today's day and age, the really successful ones, I believe, can understand and translate tack into business strategy. It is not enough to say, hey, look at this cool widget I built. Nobody cares, what people care about is how will this widget give customer value and ultimately, ROI to the company.

**Lisa Nichols 42:30**

Yeah, that's so good. That's so good. One more thing, and I'm going to talk to you about something extra. I know that you're doing a lot pour into others, and I think you're even is it PwC that you're coaching for right now, is that right? Gint? So, tell me a little bit more about that.

**Gint Grabauskas 42:44**

I've done some work for the last two years. So, PwC has asked me twice now to bring their spring cohort of partners through, it's called the path to the C suite. And what I do is I'll take two cohorts over a two-month period in the spring. And we coach guide and mentor them with case studies of how do you approach and engage with the C suite. And the C suite can be anyone, CEO, CFO, CTO, so I'm part of a set of coaches at PwC. We do this part time, once a year. We're tasked to do it to bring these partners up to, or near partners up to a level where they become partner. And that's a lot of fun. And I will say that of all of my 30-year career, Lisa, you know, building systems building, getting to IPOs building tech, some of my most fun things I'm most proud of are people I have coached are now CTOs themselves. VPs they've grown in their career, they've taught me a thing or two. And I feel humbled that I did my small part to help folks, you know, build themselves up.

**Lisa Nichols 43:45**

Right. We'll get you know, they say that's the tenant of a real leader, is can that leader make other leaders. And so, you're doing that, and I know, you're so passionate. I just wish you did have a little bit more passion, my friend. That's the only thing I do think you need to work. I love that about you. You're just the most positive passionate person I know. But let me ask you this. This is called something extra. What do you believe, Gint, is it something extra that every leader needs?

**Gint Grabauskas 44:17**

Great question and really had me thinking about this. And to me, I there's so many things, but I came down to one word, grit. And translated that's resilience. If you look at Angela Duckworth, she's done a TED talk on this a few years ago. I'm a big fan of hers. Grit Resilience is the ability to deal with adversity and still come out, come out passionate and positive. As a leader in tech, you will be faced with so much diversity, top people wanting to quit, CEOs that are

mad at you, product failures, things that are late, technology, bugs, cyber-attacks, like it's it could drive you crazy. But it's also a very fun amazing, exciting, exhilarating field to be in. So, but the grit is keeps, you're waking up every morning to get back at it. When you're, you know what you can, there are days you'll take a step back, but get back up and understand that you can take that step forward. Don't ever give up. So, grit and resilience are the that's something extra, I would advise folks off.

**Lisa Nichols** 45:20

I love it. Well, Gint, this has been so much fun. I appreciate you and I know that you were so, so busy and leading these teams and leading Qwick to, to its next level and, and so I just appreciate so much for taking the time to be on the show today. And I know it's going to help our listeners so thank you my friend.

**Gint Grabauskas** 45:38

Lisa, it was a pleasure. Thank you so much for inviting me and I can't believe I quickly the hour is gone. Great questions. I stay a huge fan of yours, Greg's and tech partners. Thank you.

**Announcer** 45:49

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